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Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers

Evaluation of the outcome of the steps taken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve the year 2000 problem

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

This report provides information pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/114 in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to evaluate the outcome of the steps taken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve the year-2000 problem. The report summarizes the submissions of the United Nations organizations, funds, programmes, and specialized agencies on their activities relating to year-2000 conversion preparations and the results.

* The present report is being submitted after the deadline owing to the need to compile inputs not received by the deadline from a number of organizations within the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. Following its review of the report entitled "Steps taken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve the year 2000 date conversion of computers" (A/54/525), the General Assembly, in its resolution 54/114, requested that the Secretary-General report on the outcome of the steps taken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve the year-2000 problem. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

II. United Nations

A. Headquarters

2. Actions taken by the United Nations during 1999 to address Y2K issues were outlined in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/54/525). The steps included the establishment of a management group and operational team to address Y2K issues at Headquarters and to coordinate the United Nations system response to the Y2K problem.

3. During the critical rollover period from 30 December 1999-3 January 2000, an interdepartmental crisis management team (CMT) was charged with the task of providing logistical, technical and communications support to facilitate decision-making in the event of a crisis. The focus of the crisis strategy was to ensure the safety of United Nations staff and to deal effectively with any potential emergency situation, particularly crises relating to international security, humanitarian affairs or peacekeeping issues. CMT was supported by a crisis response and analysis team (CRT) of senior technical and substantive staff that analysed incoming reports from the field and monitored all Y2K-related developments on a 24-hour basis in the Joint Situation Centre.

4. All duty stations throughout the world reported to the Joint Situation Centre at United Nations Headquarters during the rollover period. Member States, peacekeeping operations, and specialized agencies submitted reports indicating normal operations and no Y2K-related disruptions. The Y2K Situation Centre received reports from 158 offices located in 147 Member States, including periodic submissions from each reporting unit as follows: Africa, 173; Asia and Pacific region, 67; Latin America, 66; Arab States, 55; Europe, 80; Liaison Offices, 12. The reports showed that no significant Y2K disruptions occurred.

5. At United Nations Headquarters, information technology (IT) infrastructure remained fully operational and unaffected by the Y2K rollover. The entire computing and telecommunications infrastructure operated throughout the millennial transition without incident, as did all day-to-day office systems and critical services. As noted below, the United Nations achieved full Y2K readiness in terms of IT applications and infrastructure at all duty stations and experienced no problems. A significant contributory factor in the success of the United Nations preparations was attributable to implementation of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which is fully Y2K compatible, at all duty stations.

6. The preparations for Y2K at the United Nations yielded several useful results which have improved overall productivity and readiness. For example, the cataloguing and inventory of the status of applications at Headquarters resulted in a more efficient means of identifying computing problems that require attention. Moreover, while the United Nations managed a successful millennial transition and was not required to respond to any serious problems, the Y2K project provided an opportunity to gain insights into emergency management which extend beyond the threat of IT failure. The Y2K efforts enabled the United Nations to identify mission-critical systems and to develop contingency plans for each of them. The overarching strategies benind Y2K contingency planning will be instrumental in the development of future disaster-recovery plans. Finally, during the preparations for Y2K a high level of cooperation and collaboration was forged between system agencies, and between headquarters and field duty stations.

B. Offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions

United Nations Office at Geneva

7. The Y2K strategy at the United Nations Office at Geneva went through a staged process involving the identification of vulnerable systems, the remediation of all critical systems and software, the dissemination of vital information to staff members, and the

development of contingency plans. The Division of Administration reported that the rollover was successful and that the implemented plans assisted the flow of information and served to reassure departments during the rollover period.

United Nations Office at Vienna

Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention

8. The Y2K rollover produced no problem for the United Nations Office at Vienna or the Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, mainly due to the coordinated activities of all parts of the organization to identify and correct potential Y2K problems. Efforts in some areas, such as the development and maintenance of IT systems, commenced as early as 1996. As of June 2000, no Y2K-related problems had been reported.

United Nations Office at Nairobi

9. The United Nations Office at Nairobi implemented a comprehensive Y2K Programme and entered the new millennium with no reports of any significant incidents. The Y2K efforts, which entailed extensive contingency planning and the modification of critical systems, networks, and software, ensured a smooth rollover.

Economic Commission for Africa

10. The Y2K procedures enacted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) were highly successful, and no problems were encountered either during or after the transition period. The entire operation which was undertaken collaboratively with the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) (Office of Central Support Services, United Nations Secretariat) and the IMIS team in New York, involved extensive cooperation of ECA with both the United Nations and other specialized agencies in Ethiopia. The United Nations and ECA communicated throughout the Y2K project, and ECA provided support and guidance to other agencies as the rollover date approached. Many desktop computers and servers were replaced, and all operating systems were modified to ensure compliance. As a result of Y2K efforts, the IT system of ECA has been significantly upgraded.

Economic Commission for Europe

11. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) established an effective work plan to ensure a smooth transition and engaged in a comprehensive Y2K compliance process. The procedure entailed the verification for year 2000 compatibility of all automated systems. Non-compliant systems were replaced or upgraded. ECE management was involved in all phases of the Y2K compliance process, and an Intranet site was created to keep the staff informed of Y2K initiatives. The ECE local area network experienced no critical system failures and continues to function properly. As a result of the considerable time and effort spent, the organization was completely prepared for Y2K.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

12. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) engineered a straightforward and uneventful transition to the year 2000, having ensured full Y2K compliance of its vital computer hardware, software applications, and building facilities by the end of 1999. Although ESCAP was initially hampered by its obsolete computers, LANs, and software, it succeeded because of an early start in its Y2K efforts and the collaborative implementation of a Y2K remediation plan. The ESCAP Working Group on Year 2000 Preparedness maintained constant contact with the United Nations and with the Thai Government during the development of contingency plans.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

13. To ensure Y2K compliance and a smooth transition to 1 January 2000, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) took several preventative measures involving its computing systems. For example, all personal computers that were lower than the minimum standards stipulated by the ITSD for Y2K compliance were replaced.

14. During the critical week beginning 30 December 1999, ESCWA administration closely monitored all IT operations and initiated a comprehensive systems test. All LAN systems were backed-up as a fallback mechanism in the event of a Y2K-induced failure. As a result of its preparations, ESCWA met the year 2000

transition with minimal disruptions and without any corruption or loss of data.

III. United Nations funds and programmes

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

15. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) attributed its smooth transition during the rollover period to a high degree of preparedness resulting from extensive Y2K efforts. Coordinating these efforts with those of the United Nations Office in Geneva, UNCTAD hired additional technical staff and replaced obsolete equipment to ensure Y2K compliance. Essential data was preserved through backup measures, and a 24-hour Y2K hotline was established to share information and promote awareness throughout the organization.

United Nations Development Programme

16. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) experienced a successful Y2K transition, reporting only minor e-mail date problems on a few personal computers at headquarters and encountering no disruptions to the file servers at either headquarters or country offices. Concerning Member States, the UNDP Y2K Coordination Centre received a total of 616 reports covering 156 countries. UNDP country and liaison offices contributed 479 of those reports, with all of the country offices reporting. The remaining 137 reports were submitted by other United Nations missions and agencies. The country offices reported on minor disruptions in telecommunications, shipping, and banking services.

17. UNDP realized several beneficial outcomes from the Y2K preparatory process. They included the upgrading of file servers in 46 country offices, installation of mobile satellite telephone systems at an additional 37 country offices, verification of complete technical compliance of all corporate hardware and software, upgrading of the organizational infrastructure for emergency response capacity, and practical experience gained in contingency planning.

United Nations Office for Project Services

18. The United Nations Office for Project Services was an active participant in the Y2K-related initiatives organized by the United Nations and UNDP. It mounted its own aggressive Y2K compliance programme and developed materials that were distributed to project managers and partner organizations. The materials were also made available electronically via a help site maintained on the office Intranet. No significant Y2K-related incidents were experienced by the United Nations Office for Project Services or its project sites.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

19. The Y2K strategy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) included updating all systems and hardware, enhancement of communication among field offices to improve awareness, and cooperation with other United Nations offices. In addition, a comprehensive Y2K transition plan was devised with the goal of monitoring the overall situation and the status of information technology and telecommunications problems in all UNHCR offices. Overall, the exercise proved beneficial because of the acquisition of updated software and the review of communication systems. No serious disruptions were experienced during the change of year.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

20. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had a smooth error-free Y2K turnover; thus, the contingency sub-plans relating to areas such as hardware, operating systems, applications and the telephone switchboard were not utilized. The critical dates of 1 January and 29 February passed with no significant problems. Several glitches concerning the display of dates that did not affect the Agency's computer operations were detected. They were immediately fixed, and UNRWA overcame the Y2K challenge successfully.

World Food Programme

21. The World Food Programme (WFP) initiated an assessment of Y2K and its potential impact in 1996, by reviewing date storage methods in mainframe and

PC-based applications. That was followed in 1998 by the phased approach suggested by the Economic and Social Council, comprising awareness-building, inventory assessment, action plans and contingency plans. The Y2K project was promoted as a business management issue to ensure that the food pipeline for the hungry poor was not interrupted, that services available to WFP staff were protected, and that the operational environment was securely maintained.

22. WFP warehouses were stocked with the authorized levels of food commodities, as suggested by country directors. Thus, food availability was guaranteed for a minimum of three months in the event of an interruption in the food pipeline. Seaports, airports and railways were checked to ascertain Y2K compliance. Country offices worked within the resident coordinator system on various infrastructure issues.

23. On 1 January 2000, a selected group of 28 countries was called to ascertain the country status. No unusual developments were reported. All country and liaison offices reported on 3 and 11 January on a standard template about prospective disruptions in main areas. None suggested that the "millennium bug" would cause humanitarian disasters anywhere.

24. The high priority of the Y2K project made it an ideal opportunity for WFP to update, upgrade and harmonize its information technology and security systems within a short time-frame. The success of the project and the fact that no significant Y2K-related disruptions have so far occurred has given WFP staff at large a general sense of achievement and has reinforced the Programme's confidence in its ability to react to other potential emergency situations realistically and effectively.

United Nations University

25. The United Nations University (UNU) reported no Y2K-related incidents within its information system. Non-compliant equipment was replaced, and all-important data were backed up on the central servers at the UNU headquarters. While the Y2K rollover passed without disruption, the experience permitted an efficient monitoring of the general security of operations and a greater awareness of the level of mutual interdependence required to maintain support services. Y2K also created an opportunity for a closer examination of equipment and software specifications.

26. During the critical period immediately before and after the rollover date, the UNU LAN was isolated and disconnected from external connections, with a supplementary stand-alone server installed for use during the changeover. In addition, UNU maintained an overnight presence to report on potential glitches experienced both at the UNU headquarters and in Japan, one of the earliest countries to experience the Y2K rollover.

International Trade Centre

27. The International Trade Centre (ITC) experienced no problems attributable to Y2K, thanks to the extensive preparatory measures taken by the Centre since 1996. Those measures, which included producing detailed inventories of all computer hardware, software, and applications, frequent checks of Y2K system compliance, and upgrading network software, yielded long-term benefits in terms of office productivity.

International Computing Centre

28. In addition to extensive preparations, the ICC Management Committee of the International Computing Centre (ICC) ordered a precautionary shutdown of all its services on 31 December 1999 and restarted the services early on 1 January 2000 to permit a new set of tests and validations. These measures were undertaken successfully, and by the morning of 1 January 2000 ICC confirmed that all systems and facilities were functional. The resolution of Y2K required the establishment of detailed inventories of systems, software and hardware. The resulting inventories of information assets can now be used to focus future work on establishing common or convergent IT strategies across the system.

IV. Specialized agencies

International Labour Organization

29. The International Labour Organization (ILO) began its project on the year 2000 compliance in 1997. All mission-critical systems and components were reviewed and remediated at an early stage, providing ample time for comprehensive testing and implementation before the beginning of the new century. ILO faced no significant difficulties at the start of the new year.

30. Several ancillary benefits emerged from the Y2K issue. Preparations for Y2K compliance afforded the opportunity to review and re-engineer many computer functions and processes. In many cases, the new procedures increased the performance of computer operations, applications, and equipment. The replacement of older and obsolete desktop workstations increased productivity, and modernized computer applications have improved overall functionality. Moreover, the required enhancements to the computer operations environment have improved equipment capacity and provided additional management tools.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

31. During the critical rollover period, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) effected a partial shutdown of its IT facilities, a closure of its headquarters, and a security plan with the cooperation of the other Rome-based United Nations agencies. The start-up of all critical systems on 3 January revealed that all the Y2K remedial actions had been effective. Therefore, contingency measures that were in place did not have to be implemented. This smooth transition was the final outcome of a project launched in June 1997 during which the organization upgraded its IT equipment and systems and improved its building infrastructure in order to avoid any potential problems.

32. The rollover also went smoothly in the decentralized offices, as the telecommunication links with headquarters resumed normal operations at the end of the planned shutdown. The few minor glitches that FAO did encounter clearly demonstrated that the consequences would have been more severe had the organization failed to take the necessary preventive action.

33. The Y2K preparations also yielded several lasting benefits, including:

(a) An opportunity for replacing old and obsolete hardware and software earlier than otherwise would have been done, thus increasing the efficiency and reliability of the IT infrastructure at FAO;

(b) Greater standardization of the IT infrastructure and platforms, both at headquarters and in the decentralized offices, a situation which will result in improved user support;

(c) Elimination of old code and applications, which will simplify software maintenance functions;

(d) Extensive use of remote software updates, which have brought over 90 per cent of the PCs in FAO up to the same software versions on all standard software titles. This approach will be applied in future software rollouts with the aim of reducing deployment and support costs.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

34. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) took several preparatory steps to ensure that the year 2000 conversion was completed without incident. It focused its attention on mission critical systems, network servers and applications, and microcomputers. Those responsible for Y2K preparation work were particularly vigilant regarding field offices, where the preparation efforts were closely coordinated with other United Nations agencies at each location. UNESCO announced that it had developed contingency plans to confront any potential problems that might have arisen due to the complexity of the issues and to external variables beyond the control of the organization. UNESCO encountered no problems at either of the critical rollover dates in January and February 2000.

35. The coordination between UNESCO and the other organizations of the United Nations system proved particularly beneficial, as it produced an exchange of information, strategies, and tools. UNESCO acknowledged the invaluable assistance of both the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) and the leadership of the United Nations mission for Y2K, which played significant roles in the coordination.

International Civil Aviation Organization

36. The successful Y2K measures undertaken by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) resulted in a seamless and uneventful rollover to 2000. These measures resulted in upgrading or replacing non-compliant equipment and software and in testing and converting date-sensitive systems and applications. The upgrades and modifications during the months leading up to January 2000 resulted in a general improvement in overall capability and stability of IT systems. An

additional benefit was the development of a comprehensive inventory of systems and applications.

World Bank

37. The World Bank Group's year 2000 programme activities concluded at the end of February 2000. The Bank focused on:

(a) Outreach work with member countries, including the infoDev grant facility;

(b) A review of the Bank Group's lending portfolio, leading to the offer of fast-track Y2K loans;

(c) The verification of internal World Bank Group systems, which ensured that all systems and infrastructure would be operational, both at its headquarters and country offices in January 2000.

38. In addition, a management strategy and rollover plan was developed to guide Bank units at headquarters and country offices. A Y2K command centre operated around the clock from December 31 to January 3 to monitor the transition and resolve any Y2K-induced disruptions. No problems or disruptions to the Bank's business operations or projects occurred.

International Monetary Fund

39. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that the Y2K transition took place with no major problems in its IT systems. The organization attributed the smooth rollover to its timely preparatory efforts which included a comprehensive inventory of both IT and non-IT systems, as well as periodic management reviews of the evolving Y2K plans. Furthermore, IMF conducted extensive testing of mission critical IT and building systems and devised contingency plans for use in the event of failure. The Fund reported that none of the member States drew upon the funding facility that the IMF had established for countries that encountered Y2K-related balance-of-payments problems.

Universal Postal Union

40. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) announced a successful transition to the year 2000 and had no reports of any significant problems in any member country. This lack of disruption was a testament to the substantial preparation efforts of the postal world in confronting the Y2K problem. The efforts included a special year 2000 working group to ensure the coordination of all Y2K activities, both within its headquarters and among UPU member countries, the distribution of progress reports, and the submission of questionnaires addressing the level of readiness among UPU member countries.

International Telecommunication Union

41. With the aid of a task force established under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in March 1998, most international telecommunications carriers had completed their Y2K programs by mid-1999. The task force implemented a series of measures to ensure that no major disruption to the industry would occur as a result of Y2K, including the provision of support to telecommunications operators and carriers to achieve full Y2K compliance.

42. As a result of these initiatives, the transition was smooth throughout the industry, and ITU reported only minor cases of congestion at peak periods on international telephone networks and local cellular services. The minor incidents during the rollover period included slight service difficulties encountered by a carrier in Asia, a brief glitch in the billing software of a European operator, and a temporary disruption of printing capacity at an American cellular phone and pager business. All of these minor interruptions were rectified within days.

World Meteorological Organization

43. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) experienced no negative impact of Y2K on the computer systems within the secretariat. In advance of the Y2K rollover, WMO moved its secretariat to a new facility that was equipped with Y2K-compliant computerized services and control systems. In addition, WMO took such steps as replacing obsolete hardware and upgrading standard software applications to ensure compliance with its IT systems.

44. WMO reports that there were no significant Y2K-related interruptions in the provision or quality of data and products generated by the worldwide meteorological services. This successful transition can be partially attributed to widespread information-sharing among the WMO, its members, and satellite operators.

World Intellectual Property Organization

45. The computer operations at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) encountered no

Y2K-related incidents during the transition to the year 2000, and its Y2K project ended on 31 March 2000. This successful outcome was a direct result of staff efforts and cooperation throughout the organization. Among the benefits of the Y2K measures were systematic upgrading of the IT infrastructure, consolidation of system documentation, and migration to a Y2K-compliant operating system. In addition, the Y2K project revealed several apparent weaknesses, such as inadequate documentation of operational procedures and the need to replace certain obsolete IT systems.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

46. The year 2000 compliance programme of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) ensured a smooth transition into the new millennium. IFAD encountered no Y2K-related difficulties during the rollovers of 1 January 2000 or 29 February 2000. Monitoring has continued throughout the year.

47. The IFAD compliance programme comprised three planning stages: risk assessment; remedial action and validation testing; and contingency planning. In addition to securing a successful passage to the year 2000, each phase of the programme realized practical benefits, culminating in a comprehensive information security programme that minimizes the risk of IT failure. Furthermore, the Y2K contingency planning has become a model for the development of disaster-recovery plans for use in case of critical problems in carrying out IFAD functions.

International Atomic Energy Agency

48. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) undertook several measures to address the Y2K issue at headquarters and encountered no disruptions that affected the secretariat's information systems or infrastructure. Efforts centred on facilitating the exchange of information between departments as well as with other organizations of the United Nations system. The experience gained through Y2K-related activities will contribute to a higher quality of IT planning and operations within IAEA.

49. IAEA assisted member States by providing them with information and training. It focused on safety issues of nuclear power plants and research reactors, the safety of nuclear fuel-cycle and radioactive waste-management facilities, the safety of medical facilities that use radiation generators and radioactive materials. In addition, plans were implemented to address electricity grid performance and nuclear power plant operations, as well as the internal IT infrastructure. These efforts were instrumental in helping to ensure that nuclear power plants and research reactors around the world passed the 1999-2000 rollover safely. The collaboration between the Agency, member States, and other international organizations facilitated the sharing of information and minimized the duplication of work. IAEA also supported the review of national contingency plans to ensure their completeness and adequacy.

World Trade Organization

50. The World Trade Organization (WTO) addressed Y2K issues at an early stage and made all of the necessary modifications to ensure a smooth transition. WTO encountered no Y2K-related problems in 2000.

V. Member States

International Y2K Cooperation Centre

51. The International Y2K Cooperation Centre (IYCC) was established by Member States in February 1999 at a meeting of Y2K coordinators who believed there should be increased cooperation and communication among them on the Y2K date conversion problem. The mission of IYCC was to promote increased strategic cooperation and action among Governments, peoples and the private sector to minimize adverse Y2K effects on the global society and economy. IYCC was supported by the World Bank and donations from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, Switzerland, France, Italy, and Australia. A significant portion of the information contained below derives from an IYCC report, entitled "Y2K: Starting the century right!".

52. In response to the Y2K crisis, IYCC initiated the following measures to promote coordination and communication among Member States:

(a) IYCC provided a mechanism for the acquisition and dissemination of information

concerning the Y2K problem. The mechanism entailed the regular distribution of electronic bulletins sent to more than 400 correspondents in more than 170 nations. In addition, IYCC created and maintained a comprehensive web site that received over 9 million hits;

(b) IYCC implemented a flexible response network linking international organizations, the G-8 nations, the United Nations Emergency Response Coordinator, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund to ensure rapid assistance in the event of disruptions;

(c) Among the organizational initiatives of IYCC were 45 regional conferences, two United Nations-hosted global conferences of national Y2K coordinators, and joint planning and information-sharing with more than 20 other global organizations;

(d) IYCC organized a system of global networks by which Member States were classified into eight geographical regions to facilitate communication. Each region had a regional coordinator who was responsible for promoting cooperation and information-sharing among the countries in the region.

Asia

53. IYCC reports that the Asian regional group weathered the rollover in January 2000 with overall success, due to regional cooperation, information-sharing, commendable early leadership by the Philippines, Japan, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The region did experience minor Y2K glitches, and scattered, moderate disruptions in Pakistan and the Philippines.

Central America and the Caribbean

54. The Y2K coordinators in Central America and the Caribbean were well positioned, both nationally and regionally, to handle Y2K problems and to work together. Only two countries, Grenada and Nicaragua, reported minor glitches in governmental services. The region fared well as a result of the coordination and early preparations. In addition, the dependencies on technology were not high in most countries, and their common languages, close proximity and similar cultures made sharing timely information easier.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

55. The Eastern Europe and Central Asia region initially appeared to be among the least prepared of the regional groups, having reported the latest average remediation completion dates. The region actively sought assistance from the international community to support national and regional Y2K initiatives. UNDP provided significant aid and support to the regional Y2K cooperation centre, and that assistance proved invaluable in helping the region to resolve Y2K problems. Thus the region managed a smooth transition to the year 2000, and IYCC reported no significant Y2K problems within the region.

Middle East and North Africa

56. As a region of great diversity and meagre resources for Y2K training, the Middle Eastern and North African region was forced to confront significant obstacles in their Y2K cooperation efforts. Although the region had one of the lowest reporting levels during the rollover, the 14 countries that shared reports indicated that the transition was a smooth one.

North America

57. The North American region fared very well during the transition to January 2000, since none of the three countries (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) reported any significant Y2K-related disruptions. The reasons for the success were attributable in large measure to the early preparations in most critical sectors, significant cooperation among the three countries, and a strong national programme in each country. The three achieved a high state of coordination and communication during the rollover period. For example, Canada and the United States exchanged observers in each other's coordination centres, and the Mexican and United States coordinators had regularly scheduled telephone conversations during the rollover. No disruptions were reported.

South America

58. The South American region weathered the Y2K problem with considerable success, reporting only minor incidents at local levels. The region benefited from early coordination efforts, efficient organization and information-sharing among the regional countries, and the diligent work of industrial-sector working

groups. All of the countries in the region had national programmes at an early stage, and this timely preparation led to the early formation of effective regional institutions, such as the Y2K Forum of South America and Mercosur, to confront the Y2K problem. The region also benefited from existing bilateral relationships between neighbouring countries which helped to form a foundation for collaboration in important areas such as energy, telecommunications, health and customs. The Forum, having achieved considerable success in respect to cooperation on Y2K, is currently investigating ways of continuing the collaboration in other areas of interest among South American Governments.

Sub-Saharan Africa

59. The sub-Saharan African region began its Y2K efforts relatively late and therefore faced significant obstacles, with little time to address problems. The variety of languages was another obstacle which resulted in delays in translation of documents and the non-availability of some Y2K tools in local languages. While some insignificant disruptions did occur, there were no widespread systemic failures in Africa. For example, the IYCC report indicates that Rwanda had problems in its custom systems, Zimbabwe had some problems with its municipal payroll systems, and Nigeria experienced a glitch in its refinery, but all these problems were either fixed or contingency plans were successfully implemented.

Western Europe

60. Western Europe was well prepared on both regional and national levels for the transition to the year 2000. The state of preparedness can be attributed to the intensive efforts by Governments and private-sector organizations and the efficient coordination between sectors and countries. Among Western European countries and their neighbours, cross-border dependencies in electric power and natural gas and the safety of nuclear power plants were the main areas of Y2K concern, leading to regional coordination and support. The region did encounter minor, localized disruptions in hospital equipment, financial institutions, and retailing.

VI. Conclusion

61. The General Assembly may wish to take note of this report.